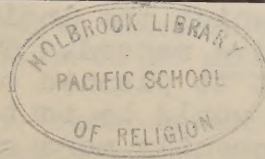


"To promote Christian ideals for agriculture and rural life; to interpret the spiritual and religious values which inhere in the processes of agriculture and the relationships of rural life; to magnify and dignify the rural church; to provide a means of fellowship and cooperation among rural agencies: *Toward a Christian Rural Civilization.*"

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Noneconomic Goals of Farming and Rural Life

By Ward F. Porter, Jr.*

AIMS, OBJECTIVES, GOALS, AND VALUES:

After considerable thought, I decided that one possible approach to such a discussion - and I hope the best one - would be to think out loud with you about various ramifications of this topic and to humbly suggest a few broad goals that appear to be reasonable, pertinent, and in the minds of the farm people themselves.

Our first task, it seems to me, is to delineate exactly what we're to talk about. Let's take the matter of goals first. What are they and how important are they in our daily living? For our purposes, in fact for the purposes of this conference as a whole, goals can be considered as more or less the ends of human endeavor. This implies that goals are the more or less conscious ends of planned activity - mental or otherwise.

To me, there are at least two kinds of goals -- those for the short-run and those for the long-run. There are many who argue for different terms to distinguish between these two levels. In fact, some add a third term and a third level. To these folks, aims are the most general type of human ends, with objectives next below them, and goals winding up in last place, being the most specific and most short-run of the three. I think we can and should dispense with these subtle distinctions in semantics. For our present purposes, let us think of goals as being somewhat synonymous with "aims", including the more immediate and the ultimate. At least, that would seem to be in keeping with the theme of this conference.

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An address by Ward F. Porter, Jr., Extension Analyst, Division of Extension Research and Training; delivered at the 34th Annual Conference of the American Country Life Association, Pennsylvania State University, July, 1955.

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There occurs to me one other possible interpretation of the term "goals" - one that cannot be dispensed with as easily as the above. I am referring to the possible confusion of goals and values. While the two terms are sometimes used interchangeably, there is a real difference between them. To the sociologist, values pertain to those aspects of life for which the individuals in any social group have a deep-seated subjective regard. They are probably more general and presumably less subject to planned or willed behavior than goals. One's conscience so-called would be in the realm of values. Goals, on the other hand, are frequently more specific, and supposedly more likely to be the conscious ends of planned human activity. This is not to say, however, that there is no connection and no over-lapping. Certainly, our goals are generally in line with and even determined by our respective value systems. The latter, in turn, are in part the product of the social group.

Many of us pride ourselves in being individuals; yet much of what we hold dear, in the subjective realm, is culturally determined. Our respective levels or standards of living, for example, are intelligible only in terms of the culture in which we live. This point should be kept in mind when we consider the goals of farming. I have assumed we would be considering the noneconomic goals of farmers in the United States, rather than in Iran or in China. However, even this is hardly specific enough. It makes quite a difference whether we are discussing the goals of the hill-country farmer in West Virginia or the commercially-oriented corn and hog farmer of the Corn Belt. We must keep this in mind, too.

You will probably recall that I have used the words "conscious" or "more or less conscious" in referring to goals. I purposely refrained from using the word "rational". There is a difference - a big difference ! A goal may be very important to us as individuals, but it need not be - and I might add frequently isn't - rationally determined. In fact, it seems to me that many social scientists make a serious mistake in assuming that mankind is basically rational. Sometime when you have a moment for thought, pause and reflect on your own behavior over the past 24 hours. As one who has done so, I must say it is a somewhat disquieting experience, one designed to promote humility in the human soul.

ECONOMIC VERSUS NONECONOMIC - WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE ?

So much for goals -- what of this term "noneconomic" ? Like many other definitions, it may be the best approach to consider first its antonym, "economic". Economic relates to the efficient and rational employment of land, labor, or capital, in the production, distribution, or consumption of real wealth (material or otherwise). In this sense, then, economics is the study of means rather than ends. It further implies rational behavior; at least, much of what the farmer does in the daily business of making a living is considered economic or uneconomic, depending on the extent to which land, labor,

or capital have been employed wisely, i. e., economically. The job of the economist, as I understand it, is not to suggest what our wants or ultimate goals should be; rather it is to suggest the most effective means of satisfying those wants. This doesn't mean, of course, that there are no legitimate economic goals. On the contrary, it merely suggests that economic goals, in themselves, either are or should be considered as means to our ends.

If this is true, then "noneconomic" must refer to all of that wide area of human activity where the means of acquiring wealth, or the means of satisfying human wants, is not of primary concern. We should all be aware of the fact, however, that there is a close relationship between the "noneconomic" and the "economic". Indeed, it is not always easy to distinguish between the two. There is no such thing as the purely "economic man" so-called; rather, man is a composite of many things: the economic, the cultural, the psychological, and so forth. The relationship between these two facets of human behavior is also evident in another sense. Many of our-so-called goals and even our values can be expressed in monetary terms. Good health, and "living the good life", in a very real sense, are goals related in part to the economics of daily living. To some degree, at least, both are purchasable commodities.

What, then, are these so-called noneconomic goals? They are simply those more or less conscious ends of human behavior toward which individuals are more or less consciously striving. Again, they are not necessarily rational, nor are they of necessity, uneconomic, or unrelated to the economic. In fact, as previously suggested, they may sometimes be arrived at by economic means. Defined in large part by the culture in which we live, they tend to be quite relative, varying in time and place; and they may be divided into numerous classes, depending on the particular focus: individual or personal goals; family goals; and goals which involve the entire community.

LET'S NOT CONFUSE MEANS WITH ENDS:

This matter of "economic" vs. "noneconomic" goals involves one aspect previously touched upon which is of major import. If we think of the economic goals as means to some noneconomic ends, we are confronted again with this problem of the relationship of means to ends. Unfortunately, or so it seems to me, there has always been a tendency to confuse the two. To cite only a few examples, witness the attitude of the early Puritans and other Calvinists regarding the accumulation of wealth and the achievement of business success. There may well be, as Max Weber believed, a close connection between the rise of capitalism and the Protestant "ethic". From his point of view, Calvinism sanctioned and fostered the growth of capitalism by emphasizing the freedom of the individual to seek wealth with relatively few restrictions - in fact with God's favor. It is reported,

for example, that one of the early European preachers of Calvinist leanings exhorted a group of Kidderminster weavers to "get rich to the glory of God." The point of concern here is that material success was taken as one sign of God's grace. Unfortunately, little if anything of a positive nature was said about what might be done with this wealth, once accumulated. It was, in a sense, an end in itself.

Likewise, I am afraid that many of our well-intentioned subject-matter specialists, extension and experiment station people alike, lose sight of the true relationship between economic goals and noneconomic goals. The farmer is encouraged on the one hand, by the specialist in animal husbandry, to produce better livestock. On the other hand, the dairy specialist urges him to build up his dairy herd. Both of them sometimes fail to consider not only the farmer's ultimate goals, but the function and role of what they, as specialists, are suggesting. In losing sight of these factors, the specialists may occasionally find themselves in conflict, each one tending to view the farm from his own special-interest point of view. This is another way of saying that means have an unfortunate habit of becoming ends in themselves.

Economic goals should be viewed, then, as stepping stones toward the non-economic goals. There is some evidence that this is now more accepted than it once was. What Edwin R. Embree once said may be true; at least we can hope so. Writing on the subject of rural education, Mr. Embree commented: "The present trend ... is not so much back to the country as back to a regard for living as contrasted to exclusive devotion to making a living. We are freeing ourselves from the obsession for money as contrasted to real wealth; our eyes are no longer wholly blinded by the garish neon lights of 'success'; there is a little mitigation in the mad rush to keep up with the Joneses."

Much more recently, I listened to Margaret Mead as she addressed the co-eds at West Virginia University. For those of us who are attempting to grow bigger and better ulcers, it is heartening to hear this world-renowned anthropologist express her opinion that the younger generation of college graduates are somewhat less concerned with "success" than earlier generations. At least instead of striving to be presidents of banks or engineering firms, youngsters are more content to be vice-presidents. They are, as she described it, more concerned with finding time to live - a commendable ambition - one that may deprive the heart specialists of the distant future of much of their income.

By this time, some of you may be wondering when we would discuss some specific noneconomic goals. From my point of view, the meat of this discussion has already been served, for what it's worth. It may be well, however, to consider a limited number of what may be real noneconomic goals, at least for a segment of our farm population.

FARM PEOPLE WANT LESS ISOLATION:

In recent years, as all of you know, there has been a marked narrowing of the once great gulf between rural and urban living. Measured in terms of degree of isolation, as well as in other ways, the commercial farmer, at least, is now practically a suburbanite.

There is a wealth of statistical evidence to substantiate this, but a few comments may suffice. Almost two-thirds of our more than 5 million farms in 1950 were located on all-weather roads. This includes all non-commercial farms, many of which are remotely situated. In 1930, only a third of all farms were on all-weather roads. The average distance to the trading center visited most frequently in 1950 was 5.4 miles, with almost half of the farms being located less than five miles from such centers. Whereas, in 1920, less than a third of the farm operators reported using an automobile, 63 percent of those in 1950 used one or more; and 75 percent had the use of an automobile and/or truck. More than nine out of ten farm families reported a radio in 1950; and an ever-growing number of them have television. Almost two out of every five had a telephone. It should be obvious, therefore, that the average farmer - and certainly the commercial farmer - is no longer as culturally isolated from the rest of the world as he once was. This change has had tremendous repercussions on farm family living, and on the business of farming. The farmer's goals today are bound to be much more comparable to those of the dominant urban segment of our population than they once were.

MODERN HOME CONVENIENCES:

With respect to other material aspects of a level of living, the life of the commercial farm family is becoming quite comparable to that of the urban family. There are many gaps left to be filled, but the historical disparity is nowhere near as great as it once was. Here are just a few items of illustration. Almost eight of every ten farm homes in 1950 reported the dwelling lighted by electricity. Of these, three out of five had a washing machine, and approximately, the same ratio reported mechanical refrigeration. Close to two-fifths had running water in the kitchen.

Suffice it is to say, farm people have taken over much of the urbanite's way of life, at least at the material level. There is abundant evidence to suggest that this trend will continue; that farm people will demand and ultimately achieve higher material levels of living to the point where living conditions on commercial farms will be quite comparable to those of the average city dweller. Improved living conditions and reduced isolation, then, as many studies have indicated, can be thought of as two of the many non-economic goals of farming.

ARE MATERIAL POSSESSIONS ENOUGH:

There are few who would criticize this striving for modern material conveniences. There are a few, however, who see, or pretend

to see, pitfalls on the road ahead, There is the danger that farm people, in their efforts to achieve the material levels of living of the city, will pay an exorbitant price. In this connection, I am reminded of the story, told some years ago, of the Dukhobor who tried to walk naked through the streets of London. "A policeman set out gravely to capture him, but found himself distanced because of his heavy clothing. Therefore, he divested himself as he ran, of garment after garment, until he was naked.; and so lightened he caught his prey. But then it was impossible to tell which was the Dukhobor and which was the policeman ! "

In other words, there is the very real danger, already apparent in some areas, of seeking after false gods, of which one is Mammon. If we look about us at all objectively, I am afraid we can already see some evidences of this, at least in some of our commercialized farming areas. "Conspicuous consumption", as the economists would call it, is frequently apparent. In their striving after city ways of living, some farm families are mortgaging the future through unwise installment buying, at a level far beyond what their present and future incomes will warrant. This is not a criticism of all installment buying or credit as such. It is merely an attempt to recognize what may be false goals and irrational behavior on the part of many farm people.

Unfortunately, I am afraid that some of us who work with farm people have unwittingly encouraged this trend. Instead of being concerned with ultimate goals, we have concentrated altogether too much attention on the more immediate and short-run objectives, some of them of a very inconsequential nature. We have, also, in this instance, forgotten the relationship of means to ends.

There are possibly other signs of trouble ahead, such as an increase in rural juvenile delinquency and in crime, to an extent hitherto unknown in rural areas. There is also evidence of growing frustration and restlessness, originally confined more or less to urban areas. The time may not be too distant when the incidence of ulcers and heart trouble will be as great in rural areas as in the urban. In any event, it is a time to take stock of our rural value systems, and reconsider our aims and the means of attaining them.

FARM PEOPLE WANT BETTER COMMUNITY FACILITIES:

There is abundant evidence that farm people envision as non-economic goals of farming much more than modern physical conveniences. They want, and are getting, much that the urbanite has accepted as commonplace for many years. Improved health services, including more doctors, dentists, nurses, and hospitals, seems to be one of their current demands.

Some of our rural studies also suggest that farm people are striving for many other community-wide goals. Better recreational

facilities, improved roads, more special-interest organizations, and better churches, to mention only a few items, are all in the picture. As Arthur F. Raper has indicated, for example, commercial farmers are relying, to an increasing degree, on formal special-interest organizations, such as livestock associations, cooperatives, credit associations, and the general farmer organizations; and this has probably resulted in a decreasing dependence on traditional mutual-aid practices. Farm people should realize that their entrance into urban-organizations, institutions, and ways of life, carries with it the responsibility of being better informed about largely urban matters, including the market economy, government, and even international affairs. The farmer has not always been prepared to assume this burden in the past, but he must do so now, as a member of the urban and world community.

BETTER EDUCATION - WHAT SHOULD IT BE ?

Education has traditionally been thought of, in this country, as a panacea and a cure-all. This may have been the result of some wishful thinking; but the fact remains that people have long sought better schools and better teachers. As a result, our illiteracy rate has certainly dropped; and the median years of schooling has climbed to hitherto unheard of levels.

There is in rural areas a growing demand for the type of education that prepares young people for happy and successful living, that is, for an education that is a means and not an end. Here again, we find a marked tendency, on the part of many, to confuse means and ends, or, more appropriately, to confuse education of the masses, with mass education. As Howard W. Odum expresses it, "education is a means and not an end; and in so far as the advocates of all great school buildings or any others tend to make the school an end in itself or education an end and institution in itself, it is likely to become stratified, artificial, supertechnical, and presently run amuck against the wishes of the people." This is not to say that the educators haven't attempted to make education an instrument for living. Despite their efforts, however, rural education is probably all too frequently stultified and expressed in traditional or urbanized patterns.

Nor is this all ! The school - rural and urban alike - must assume far greater responsibilities than ever before. The family may still be the most important educational institution, in a broad sense, particularly in the country. But it has lost much of its traditional importance in this respect. I have interviewed many elderly farm people who either never saw the inside of a school, or stayed there long enough to acquire an aversion for it. Today, however, most young people spend at least ten years in school, and more than an equivalent amount of time, outside the family. The school, therefore, is one of the most important socializing forces in our society. It must and should, as Edwin Embree pointed out, assume much of the social responsibility previously exercised by the church and the home. I am not so

certain that the school always assumes this responsibility, or that all of our people are willing to allow the school to do so. But the gap is there; and it isn't being filled, as the Judge in most any juvenile court would testify.

FAMILY SOLIDARITY:

The farmer and his wife are also interested in better family living, as contrasted with better levels of living. The inroads of urban life, with all its attractive glitter, together with the commercialization and mechanization of agriculture, have certainly affected family relationships on the farm. Farm people are apparently becoming more interested in child development and psychological adjustments. The family as a closely-knit unit of living, once fairly typical of farm areas, is now under pressure. The modern commercial farm family is certainly less of a working unit than it once was. Like the urban family, the farm family circle is no longer quite the exclusive focus of living that it once was. It may well be that the change has partly occasioned the recently intensified interest in family matters among farm people. In any event, it will be well worth their while to consider what has happened to the urban family.

THE ULTIMATE GOALS:

Much has been said of late about the tendency of the American people everywhere to stress security as their main goal in life. Economic security is usually thought of in this connection. There are undoubtedly many people who delude themselves in thinking that this is all they want and are striving for - a tragic confusion of means and ends. It may well be that through striving almost exclusively for economic security, many farm people, as well as others, have actually lost or jeopardized some of the more fundamental values that once so characterized farming as a way of life.

Economic security, in a word, is only part of the picture - an important part, largely because it should be a means to something beyond. All three types of security - economic, psychological, and sociological - are essential if life in a democracy is to have real promise and meaning.

Is then, the dollar sign the only thing to consider? I think the answer is obvious to us all. Man is basically a social and psychological being, with certain basic needs and some ill-defined but none-the-less real aims in life. The important thing is that farm people take time out - and here the new school and the church can be of help - to consider their ultimate goals and the most effective means of achieving them. It may be, as farmer-philosopher, William Ernest Hocking once said, that "... we have thought we knew what we wanted, but we have not always known what we wanted most; we have lacked a scale of values. We have been wobbly in our principles, - by the way, what are our principles? We have, in short, been in the need of a philosophy. For a man who cannot act for himself, philosophy is a luxury; for a free man, it is a necessity."